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SUBJECT: ITALY SUPPORTS REGIONAL APPROACH TO SECURITY
SUPPORT FOR 2009 AFGHAN ELECTIONS

REF: STATE 108855

Classified By: Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Barbara A. Leaf for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (C) Poloff delivered reftel demarche to Italian MFA NATO Office Director Massimo Marotti on December 17. Marotti said that Italy shares the view that a robust ISAF contribution to the Election Support Forces (ESF) is vital to the successful conduct of Presidential Elections in Afghanistan. Italy's experience in deploying extra troops during the last two elections has given Italian forces valuable insights into the political dynamic in RC-West. Discussions are underway between MFA and MOD as to how to address SHAPE's request.

12. (C) On December 23 Marotti informed Poloff that Italy had not yet reached a decision on its ESF troop contribution, but that Italian diplomatic and military authorities in Afghanistan were already reaching out to other military contributors in RC-West (Spain, Lithuania, Slovenia, Albania, the U.S.) with an eye to coordinating a regional response to the request. MFA is also considering holding a meeting of the Embassies of those countries in Rome the week before the January 14 Force Generation Conference.
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